

Safety and health alert

11/02 Apprentice loses hand in meat mincer

Incident

A 16 year old apprentice butcher suffered a serious injury and subsequent amputation of his left hand while operating a meat mincing machine.

The apprentice was pushing meat into the un-guarded mincer feed throat when his left hand became caught and made contact with the worm of the meat mincer. At the time of the incident the apprentice was using his left hand to push meat toward the mincer feed throat while pushing the meat into the opening using a plastic plunger with his right hand.

Factors

1. No permanently fixed restrictor plate over the feed throat.
2. Use of old type meat mincer with no consideration given to up-grading plant by installation of a restrictor plate.
3. Inadequate training in the safe operation of a meat mincer.
4. No formal, written system of work for safe operation of a meat mincer.

Recommendations

1. All meat mincers to be equipped with a guard to stop operators from touching the worm. Older machines may need to have the feed throat extended and narrowed or a restrictor plate fitted and interlocked with the drive motor.
2. Ensure the restrictor plate cannot be bent out of position and the feed holes are small enough to stop any part of the operator reaching the worm.
3. Fitting of delivery guards to stop operators touching the cutter knives. Guard holes should not be accessible by fingers.
4. Use of a push stick (plunger), which cannot touch the worm, to force meat down if a blockage occurs in the feed throat.
5. Development of written safety induction information for all new employees.
6. Develop written systems of work for operation of plant to prevent entanglement with moving parts.

Further Information

Further information can be obtained from the WorkSafe internet site www.worksafe.wa.gov.au, or by contacting customer service on 1300 307 877 or email: safety@docep.wa.gov.au.

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